

Jos. Stacy Murdock  
account of early  
settling of  
Timpanogos  
(Provo River Valley)

by Geo A Thompson

Early  
Heber

Dear Pharmacist—  
Please supply my patient

**OCEAN**

as pictured, as an O-T-C saline  
mist, drop or irrigant combined.  
**DO NOT OFFER A SUBSTITUTE  
PRODUCT.**

Dr. \_\_\_\_\_



children. Nevertheless, Brigham again told Joseph that it was his advice that Joseph should marry Pernetta. Joseph left Salt Lake City in a daze and returned to American Fork where he agonized long and hard over the strange guidance which Brigham had given him. Joseph never questioned any instruction or direction given him by either the Prophet Joseph or by Brigham Young, so two weeks later he returned to Salt Lake City and sought the same advice from Brigham again. And again the Mormon leader told Joseph that it was his advice and counsel that he should marry Pernetta, and he told Joseph that if he did so, it was his prophecy that Pernetta would give him a fine family which would be an honor to his name and that the marriage would also promote an even closer bond between Joseph and his Lamanite brothers, which blessing would one day be of great value to both Joseph and his church. On June 25th, 1859 Joseph and Pernetta were married by Brigham Young in the Endowment House at Salt Lake City.

Pernetta was 16 years old when she married, while Joseph was 37. In time she gave him five fine children. Those who remember her say she was a beautiful woman, having few Indian features. Her children were all properly raised and were well educated, and her home was always an example of cleanliness and beauty. Pernetta was a hard worker and often took in washing or ironing from neighbors to help with the family finances. Unfortunately, no photograph of Pernetta is known to exist.

Joseph was now busier than ever, building a new home for his fifth wife while attending to all of his other responsibilities. He had little time to ponder the strange events which had happened to him since he left New York to join the Prophet Joseph, or wonder what was ahead. Little did he suspect that he would soon be honored by Brigham Young for his years of faithful service, or that that honor would once more stretch his faith and courage to the breaking point.

When Joseph first built a home for Eunice at American Fork and helped Nymphus build his mother's home at Salt Lake City he had to go into the canyons to cut logs, for there was no timber growing in the Salt Lake Valley. He had hauled logs for his Salt Lake City home from Bingham Canyon, and when he built a cabin at White's Fort he ventured into the steep, rocky canyons between Parley's Canyon and the Provo River Canyon at Fort Utah. He hauled some saw logs from Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons and some from American Fork Canyon. He also helped others cut logs for their homes. During the Indian



troubles in 1849 and later during the Walker War he had pursued Indians into other canyons and had acquired his two Indian children from Porter Rockwell at Provo Canyon. He and Nymphus had herded cattle and searched for lost livestock and hunted game in those came canyons, so by 1860 he had already explored most of the canyons and mountains between Salt Lake City and Spanish Fork Canyon.

In 1857 Charles Carroll built a sawmill high in Big Cottonwood Canyon, and Joseph often hauled lumber from it into the valley. Carroll told him of a high mountain valley on the other side of the mountains which he and several other mill workers had seen, among them James Adams and George Jacques. Joseph and Nymphus climbed to the ridge top and looked down onto that round shaped valley to the east, but at that time they never dreamed that it would be their future home. During the spring of 1858, several of Joseph's friends from Utah Valley drove a cooperative herd of cattle up Provo Canyon to summer range at that high mountain valley. The herders were Arron Daniels, George Dean, and William Wall.

Also in the spring of 1858, as Joseph and others were returning to their homes from the Utah War, Brigham Young directed that a wagon road be built up Provo Canyon. By then the original Donnor Trail over Big Mountain and down Emigration Canyon had been abandoned for the much easier route up the Weber River from Echo Canyon to Parley's Park and over the Golden Pass to Parley's Canyon. Young believed that a wagon road from Parley's Park to the Provo River and into Utah Valley would be a shorter route for emigrants <sup>than</sup> then being sent to the new southern settlements at San Pete. It could also be used by army troops traveling to Camp Floyd, and at the same time keep them out of the Salt Lake Valley. The road was started in June, 1858 and was completed the following September, however, for the next several years it was only the roughest sort of road, barely passable for a wagon.

During July, 1858, four surveyors from Utah Valley went up the Provo River Canyon to what they named Round Valley, where they surveyed several sections of land at the north end of the valley. They included John Crook, George Bean, J.W. Snow, and Jesse Fuller. They laid out a townsite having blocks 24 rods square and streets 5 rods wide, with 4 lots to each block. For their work each received 25 acres of land and ten dollars in cash. Theirs were without doubt the first legal land claims in the valley.

That winter several families decided to move to Round Valley, and in the spring of 1859 several small groups pulled and pushed their wagons up Provo



Canyon. The first band consisted of only three wagons pulled with ox teams and was led by William Wall. Members included Charles Carroll, operator of the sawmill in Big Cottonwood Canyon who had told Joseph of the valley several years before, and John Crook, one of the original surveyors. Also among them were Thomas Rasband, John Jordan, Henry Chatwin, Jesse Bond, William Giles, and George, John, and James Carlile. But to their surprise they found another group of settlers already there, plowing ground at what they called London Springs, so named because most of the group were English converts from London. They had moved there from Manti, and among them were Robert Broadhead and James and William Davis. They had already decided that the new settlement in Round Valley would be called London Springs.

Although he had been told that crops couldn't be grown in Round Valley, Brigham Young recalled the same thing had been said of the Salt Lake Valley. He decided that since a colony of Saints was already being settled there, he would issue a "call" for more settlers and establish it as a church mission. It was called the Provo Valley Mission and William Wall was designated as Presiding Elder until a Mission President could be appointed. Young had directed that a fort be built to protect the settlers from Indians and an adobe and rock structure 40' x 40' in size was started that summer. John Witt built the first cabin at what would later become the town of Charleston.

Some hay and wheat were planted that first year, but frosts as early as August killed most of it. As many as 18 families moved to the valley that summer, but an early winter drove most of them back to Utah Valley. Only the most hardy spent that first winter at Round Valley. The first child was born at Round Valley in November, 1859 to John Davidson, the settlement's blacksmith. The tiny girl was named Timpanogos Davidson for the towering 12,000 foot peak located west of the valley. But a cemetery had to be started also, for the infant daughter of James and Sariah Cook became the first death in the valley. John Carlile was the first adult buried there.

In the spring of 1860, most of those who left during the winter returned to Round Valley. William Wall, who was Presiding Elder, decided to build his home in an isolated little valley which later became Wallsburg, leaving the larger settlement at London Springs without a spiritual leader. No one seemed to be in charge and Brigham Young couldn't get an accurate report of what was happening at the new settlement, so he summoned Joseph Murdock to his office at Salt Lake





City. Young told Joseph of his problems learning of affairs at Round Valley and asked him to go there to learn what conditions were and report back to him. Young was well aware of Joseph's past record as a pioneer at Church Pastures, White's Fort, and American Fork as well as his service as a colonizer at Carson Valley just as he was aware of his love and devotion to the church, so he knew he could depend on him.

Joseph asked Nymphus to go with him, and immediately they left to visit the new Provo Valley Mission. There he was greeted warmly by old friends like Thomas Rasband, John Crook, and Charles Carroll, but he wasn't satisfied with what had been accomplished. The wagon road up Provo Canyon had washed out and it appeared to him that the townsite had been located in a poor place. He gave the settlers the best advice and counsel he could, suggesting that they move the tiny settlement away from the foothills at London Springs, where Indians could easily stage a surprise attack, and rebuild it near the center of the valley. He also suggested that they name the new site Heber City in honor of Heber C. Kimball. The settlers approved the wisdom of his counsel and he returned to Salt Lake City to report to Brigham Young.

After making his report, Brigham asked Joseph to move to Heber City and preside over the Provo Valley Mission, telling him that he was a man who had proven his ability as a leader and one well fitted for pioneering. Joseph was proud to be so honored, although it meant pulling up stakes and moving again. With five wives and thirteen children it would be hard to leave his home at White's Fort, so he told Young that it would take several months to get his affairs in order so that he could make the move. Young agreed that he could keep watch over the <sup>new</sup> mission from his Utah Valley home until he could move his family. Joseph Stacy Murdock was ordained as Bishop and Mission President of the Provo Valley Mission on November 15th, 1860 under the hand of Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Daniel Wells. It was an honor and a trust given to few men, and all of his family and friends were proud of him.

The remainder of that fall and winter were very busy times for Joseph and his family. He made frequent trips up Provo Canyon to guide the settlers and look for a place to build his new home. In his diary, William Forman recorded that he and Joseph Murdock took up "squatter's rights" at Round Valley, although



Joseph's journal does not mention claiming any land at that time.<sup>1</sup> He was kept busy selling his land at Utah Valley and readying wagons loaded with furniture, household goods, and personal belongings for the coming trip. Eunice did not want to make the hard move so Joseph decided to keep his home at American Fork for her. His land and cabins at White's Fort were sold and several wagons purchased with the money obtained for them. It was decided that Eliza and Elizibeth would drive one wagon while Jane and Pernetta would drive another. John H., Dave, and Jonathan were only boys but still they could help Joseph herd the family's livestock along behind the wagons. The Murdocks were on the move again, and Joseph hoped it would be the last move.

The trip to Round Valley, though not long, was a hard one, especially for Jane who had given birth to William Henry less than a month earlier, on April 9th, 1861. The road, hardly more than a trail up Provo Canyon, had washed out, so they had to go north to Salt Lake City and retrace the trail up Emigration Canyon that Joseph had followed into the valley 13 years before. His journal tells briefly how they followed Emigration Canyon into Parley's Canyon which they followed over the Golden Pass to Parley's Park and the Provo River, which they found in flood stage.

*"We went up Emigration to Parley's Canyon. We had all of our belongings plus horses, cattle, sheep, and hogs. Oh, what a time we had with those hogs! They would get lost in the brush, so every little ways a halt would have to be made while everyone, women and children included, would beat the bushes to round them up. It took a weary time to go only a few miles."*<sup>2</sup>

They found the Provo River high with spring flooding and had a hard day's work swimming the livestock across. *"We had to follow the river to the Spring Branch where we forded it. We skirted the foothills to where it came out level, where we could rest for awhile and gather up the sheep and hogs."*<sup>3</sup> Later settlers and teamsters used that ford for many years after the Murdocks crossed the river there. John H., the oldest child but still only eight years old, remembered the adventure they had getting to their new home. *"Eph Hanks and*

---

1. Diary of William Forman, Utah State Historical Society.

2. Journal JSM.

3. Ibid.



*several others had to bring their ox teams to pull our heavy wagons down onto the Dutch Flats where we were to live. The grass was so high it reached over my head."*<sup>4</sup>

Ephraim and John Hanks, Peter Shirts, and several more of their new neighbors came to welcome them to the little shack they had thrown together for them. It was little more than a shed, but the women could cook in it. It was all they had until Joseph could cut logs in nearby Pine Canyon to build a more substantial home. With plowing virgin ground for much needed crops, he was busy from dawn to dark.

Their new home near where Midway now stands was a crude affair, but the women built a brush lean-to where they could do their washing and where they combed wool from their sheep to be made into homespun clothing. The river bottoms where they built wasn't known as Midway then, for the settlers had built two separate little hamlets, with a few people living at each. Indians were troublesome to the people at both villages, so Joseph had them all move to a fort located mid-way between them, and that new location soon became known as Midway. For a time some people called it Mound City for the steaming volcanic mound located there. It wasn't long until Joseph had a log cabin built on the west side of the river. It had only a dirt roof and floor, and its beds, stools, and tables were built of rough lumber made as smooth as possible with an axe. The women made their own soap from wood ashes and made tallow candles for lighting. Their closest neighbors included Ephraim K. Hanks, Daniel Jones, John Crook, and William Forman, all tried and true friends. Daniel Jones recorded how hard it was to grow crops in such a cold climate. *"In 1861 I took up ground on the Snake Creek at Heber Valley, where I built a house and raised a crop of wheat and potatoes. While binding wheat I had to wear a heavy coat and woolen mittens as the weather was so cold."*<sup>5</sup>

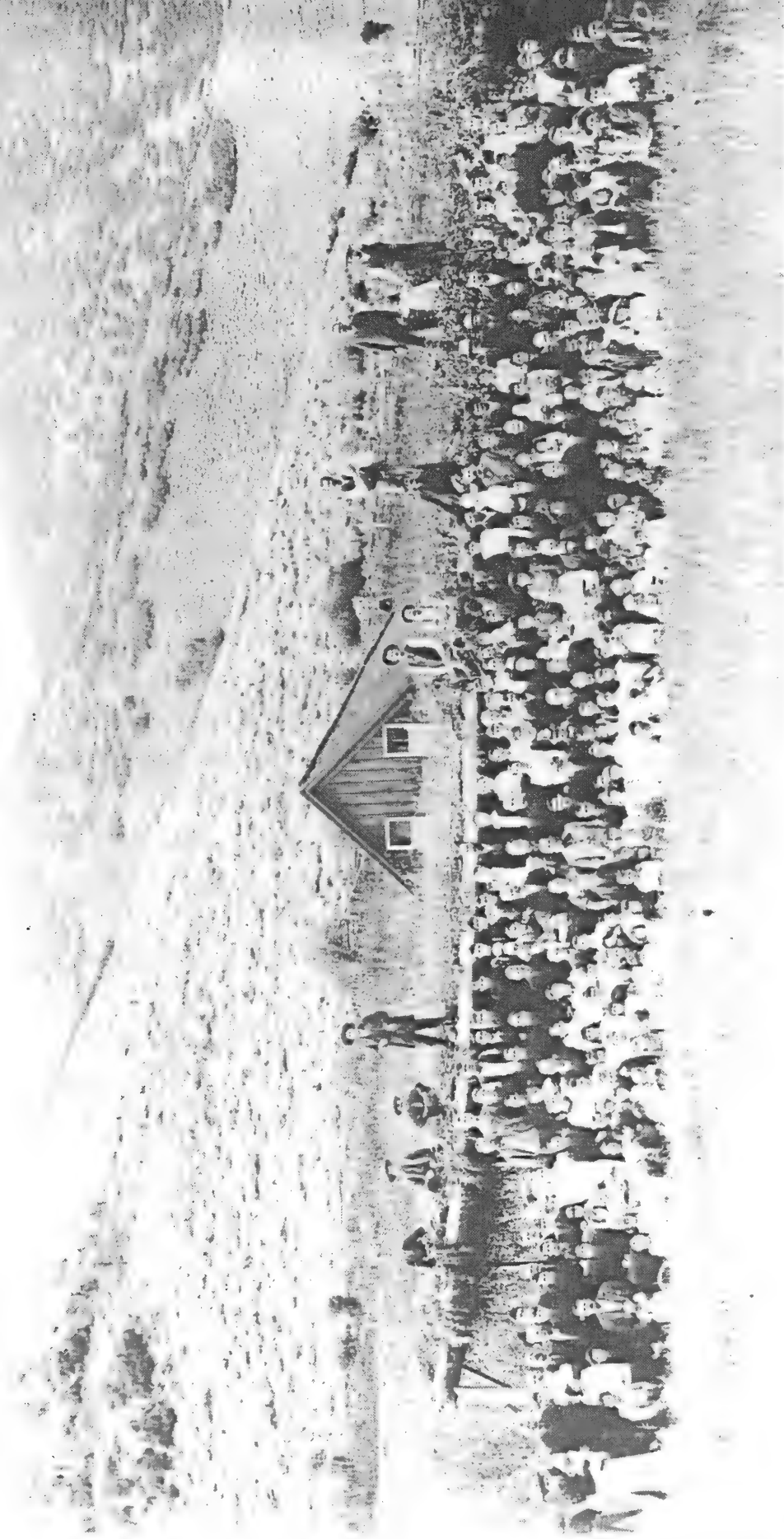
One of Joseph's first tasks was to choose capable leaders to help him. He chose Thomas Rasband and John Witt as his counsellors. John Hamilton became his clerk while John Murdock, no relation to Joseph, was designated as President of the High Priest's Quorum. It wasn't long before several small settlements began growing up across the valley, and as Presiding Bishop, Joseph had to choose

---

4. Journal of John H. Murdock.

5. Forty Years Among The Indians, Pg. 156, Daniel Jones, Bookcraft, 1960.





The old bowery, Midway, Heber Valley. Used as a church place of worship until a meetinghouse could be built. Pick Murdock standing to left of building (in black suit and hat). David standing to right of building (holding child). Standing directly under Pick and to his left are Jane, Eliza, Joseph, Elizabeth, and Nymphus.  
(Author)





Presiding Elders for each of them. He kept William Wall as Presiding Elder at Wallsburg and named George Noakes to preside at Charleston and Sidney Epperson at Midway. Later he would appoint Elders at Snake Creek, Center Creek, and Hailstone.

Between his other duties, Joseph managed to break ground and put in a crop of wheat. It failed to ripen fully, yet it was all they had. John Crook helped him harvest it, and although as their only food it became a tiresome fare, during the coming winter they were glad to have it. In his journal John Crook wrote that they had no bread and had to boil wheat for food, writing, "*We ate mush, mush, and more mush.*"<sup>6</sup> Elizibeth recalled that they had no flour, only half ripened wheat coarsely ground painstakingly slow in a coffee mill. Syrup was made by boiling beats and they collected sap from cottonwood trees for sugar. In later years Dave recalled that people had good appetites then, but not much to eat! He also recalled that he never owned a pair of shoes until he was 13 years old and wore homespun trousers and shirts. He had no belt but buttoned his shirt bottom to his trousers to hold them up.<sup>7</sup> That winter there was 2 feet of snow at Christmas time when Thomas Rasband performed the first wedding ceremony in the valley, marrying Charles Thomas and Emmaline Sessions.

One of the first jobs that Joseph set men to doing was to rebuild the road through Provo Canyon and to build a bridge over the Provo River at Hailstone where the present Jordanelle bridge is now located. Daniel Jones was assigned to the road committee and recorded, "*A flood destroyed the road through Provo Canyon, stopping all traffic. The work was pushed with considerable force, as the only way to get to the valley was by going around to Salt Lake City and through Parley's Park, a distance of nearly 100 miles while the direct route through the canyon was only 25 miles.*"<sup>8</sup>

A log cabin schoolhouse 20' x 40' was built at a location which is now 3rd North and 2nd West. Although it boasted only a hard packed dirt floor, it was also used as a church and meeting house. During the summer of 1861, Nymphus took up some farm land at Charleston, but because of business interests he

---

6. Journal of John Crook, Utah Historical Quarterly, Vol. 16, # 3, 1933.

7. Handwritten notes of interview with David N. Murdock, WPA Writer's Project, Utah State Historical Society.

8. Forty Years Among The Indians, Pg. 156, Daniel Jones, Bookcraft, 1960.



continued to live part time at his Salt Lake City home. His second wife, Ester, remained at Salt Lake City when Nymphus and Melissa later moved to Charleston.

Right from the start, settlers at Heber City had troubles with the Indians. Petty thievery soon grew into wholesale livestock thefts. Nearly a dozen large canyons led into the surrounding mountains, so it took Indians only a few minutes to steal a band of horses and disappear into the mountains. Whenever Joseph was away attending to church duties or at his farm land, everyone at home had to keep a close watch for Indians. In his journal Joseph described how one of the women would pull their table under the stove pipe hole in the roof and then putting a box on the table, little Sarah, age 8, would stand on the box with her head out the stove pipe hole to watch for Indians.<sup>9</sup>

One day Eliza and Elizbeth were baking in their brush lean-to by their tiny log cabin when several Indians rode up unseen. They demanded the fresh baked bread the women had just baked, but Elizbeth wasn't about to let her children go hungry to feed a big, healthy Indian. Joseph's journal tells what happened next. *"Elizbeth had just placed some fresh baked bread on her table when an Indian appeared in the doorway on his horse. He pointed at the bread and demanded it be given to him. Eliza was all for giving him the bread to get rid of him. Elizbeth offered him a single loaf, but the Indian became angry and motioned that he wanted all of them, and then proceeded to ride his horse right through the door. Elizbeth grabbed a stout stick and stood her ground. She hit him over the head, back, and legs as fast and hard as she could. That Indian backed his horse out of the doorway and got away from there as fast as he could ride!"*<sup>10</sup> Joseph's wives were real pioneers, brave enough to fight for their children's bread!

Not long after Elizbeth's encounter with the Indians, Dave, only 6 years old, was hit by an Indian arrow in what could easily have been a tragedy. On August 8th, 1861, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball visited the new settlement at Round Valley and Joseph was riding with them, showing the Mormon leaders the progress being made on the new fort at Midway. While Joseph was away from his home a small band of Indians made a raid there, and his journal describes what happened. *"While I was riding with Brigham some Indians came to*

---

9. Journal JSM.

10. Ibid.



the house and made a raid. They shot some arrows and one hit David in the foot, just enough to draw blood. Jane sent David out the back of the cabin and told him to run to Casper's place where he could wade in the river, and then to find me. He ran barefoot, leaving a trail of blood down to the river where he found me and Brigham. He said the Indians were at our place and showed us his foot. I put him on my horse and raced for home, but before I could get there the damage was done. The Indians had taken what they wanted, and one of the things they took was mother's paisley shawl which she had brought from Scotland. The shawl was a great loss to us, for it was something which we had that was very fine. The Indians had also taken a molasses pitcher, and that too was a great loss. I hunted many times to see if I could find it, and one day I did, but the Indians had thrown it against a rock and smashed it."<sup>11</sup>

It is hard for us to understand the great value the pioneers placed on such a commonplace thing as a shawl or a pitcher, but as Joseph wrote, "*It was something we had that was very fine,*" and they had few luxuries or things that were "very fine." Both Pernetta and Elizibeth were in a family way so Joseph took them to live with Eunice at American Fork, where Benjamin Sweet was born to Pernetta on October 11th, 1861, and James Stacy was born to Elizibeth only two months later, on December 8th, 1861.

In January, 1862 Heber Valley and the surrounding mountain country was separated from Salt Lake and Utah counties and was organized as Wasatch County. The following March, Joseph Murdock was elected to the Territorial Legislature, while John Witt was appointed as Probate Judge and John Hamilton was elected as Sheriff. Nymphus Murdock later succeeded Hamilton as Sheriff. With legislative duties to attend to at Salt Lake City added to his responsibilities as Bishop and Mission President, Joseph was kept busy almost day and night.

In the spring of 1862, Joseph moved his family from Midway to Heber City where he purchased an entire city block which had a log house already on it, built by Elisha Averett. He moved his log cabin from Midway and put it on the northeast corner of the lot, and today it is probably the oldest structure still standing in the city. He built a third cabin on still another corner and hired John Hamilton to build a solid rock home on the remaining corner. When completed in 1865 it was one of the finest rock homes in the valley and the

---

11. Ibid.





Jane Sharp Murdock with daughter, Sara Jane, and children at her pioneer log cabin,  
which still stands at Heber City  
(Author)



Sally Stacy Murdock, taken  
near the time of her death in  
1964  
(Author)



Rock Home of Joseph Stacy Murdock at Heber City  
Courtesy: Irene Marella Stanley, Heber City





first one to have a shingled roof. Its shingles were hand-split from saw logs cut at the first saw mill located in Center Creek, which was built by William Meeks and James Adams. Each of his wives now had a home of her own, although each still lived and worked happily together, helping each other with washing, quilting, and gardening.

1862 was a good year for Joseph, for he had his large family comfortably situated for the first time since he had been recalled from Carson Valley to defend Echo Canyon. His crops were harvested before frosts came that year, for in his diary John Crook wrote, "*On September 13th we threshed barley at Bishop Murdock's farm.*"<sup>12</sup> His first child born at Heber, George Calvin, was born to Eliza on February 28th, 1862. In 1862 he also had the satisfaction of seeing Johnston's Army leave Utah, recalled because of the Civil War. The army marched up Provo Canyon and through Heber City to avoid passing through Salt Lake City. When he saw the hated army leave, Joseph must have felt that all of his labor, suffering, and hardship had been worthwhile.

Church duties frequently called Joseph to Salt Lake City, and on June 12th, 1862 he attended to temple duties with Brigham Young. Afterwards he spoke to a congregation at the tabernacle. Although his journal does not mention it, we find it noted in Charles Walker's diary. "*Brother Brigham spoke and then Brother Joseph Murdock of Heber City talked on polygamy, family government, and exhortations to faithfulness before God.*"<sup>13</sup>

Joseph's little band of sheep which had grown from those first two ewes and a buck his mother had brought from Nauvoo in 1847 were fast multiplying into a good size band. His sons were now old enough to herd them in the foothills below Lake Creek, Center Creek, and Daniel's Canyon. John was 10 years old while Dave was nearly 8, but they were pioneer children, nearly as wild as Indians and could take care of themselves. Alva, born at Carson Valley, was only 4, but in only a few more years he would become one of the leading stockmen in the territory.

The first real Independence Day celebration held in Heber Valley was on July 4th, 1863, with a parade, speeches, singing, and the usual reading of the Declaration of Independence. Joseph offered the Invocation for the celebration.

---

12. Journal of John Crook, Ibid Note #6 above.

13. Diary of Charles Walker, Pg. 213, Utah State University, 1980.



Only a month later, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball attended conference at Heber City, and they praised Joseph and his counsellors for the great amount of work which had been accomplished, and complemented all of the pioneers for the new homes and thriving little city they had established in the wilderness. Several Presiding Elders and Bishops were appointed and ordained by Joseph during the conference, William Forman at West Heber, David Van Wagoner at Midway, and John Harvey at Center Creek.

Two more children were born in 1863, Betsy Eunice to Pernetta on February 28th and Mary Cecelia to Jane on May 24th. Little Mary Cecelia lived less than a year, dying in May, 1864. The hurt of her loss was softened somewhat by the birth of Alphonzo Brigham to Elizibeth several months earlier, on March 15th, 1864.

High on a landmark rock above the Provo River at <sup>Jordanville</sup> ~~Hairstone~~ there is an American Flag painted, in a place where it can be seen from all over the valley below. There are several stories of how that flag came to be painted there. Some claim that soldiers under Col. Patrick Connor's command at Fort Douglas painted it, but a Murdock family tradition tells that Benny Norris painted the flag for that first Independence Day celebration at Heber Valley in 1863. But whether he painted it or not, there is no doubt that he kept it painted so long as he lived, and today it is still there for all to see. Benny had become too much for Sally to handle at Salt Lake City, so when Joseph moved to Heber, he brought Benny to live with his family there.

On September 25th, 1864 Sally Stacy Murdock died at the adobe brick home she and Nymphus had built at 3rd South and Main Street at Salt Lake City. She was 86 years of age and had been one of the earliest converts to the church in New York State. She had suffered through the trials at Nauvoo and the hard times at Winter Quarters. She was one of the pioneers of 1847, driving her own one-horse shay across the prairies soon after she had become a widow. She brought the first sheep into the territory and for years afterwards clopped their wool, spun it into cloth and made clothes which she gave to the needy. She was always the first to help the less fortunate and was beloved by all. She was a stalwart in the church and raised her sons to become the pioneers, colonizers, and church leaders they became noted for. Her passing was a sore trial for Joseph, but it nearly drove Nymphus to despair, for at nearly the same time as



her death, a diphtheria epidemic struck and claimed five of his children, sorely testing his faith.

Three out of four of his wife Sarah's children died during the epidemic, Nymphus Jr., Sarah, and Betsy, while two of Ester's three children, Stanley and Alphonso also died. The death of his mother and five children almost broke Nymphus. He became very bitter and wanted to leave the valley, saying, "*Brigham Young should have known better than to send us to such a God-forsaken place!*" Joseph tried to console him, but Nymphus cried out, "*It is very well for you to talk that way, for you have not lost any children!*" Joseph weighed his brother's words with deep sympathy, and then he said, "*Pick any of my children that you want to replace those who were lost.*" At first Nymphus was speechless and refused, but when Joseph told him that it would be easier for his wives if they had children to care for and ease their hurt, Nymphus consented and took Joseph's son Thomas and daughters Rocksina and Charlotte. Few ever knew how Nymphus came to raise those children of Joseph's until many years later when John H. reluctantly told his son Paul how Joseph's wisdom in a time of crisis not only gave comfort to Nymphus and his wives, but also kept their two families united as one.<sup>14</sup>

---

14. Interview with Paul Murdock, April 20th, 1972.

